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Historical Miscellanies
Relating to
Long Island

BY
CHARLES J. WERNER



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WILLIAM S. MOUNT

From a photograph made in 1855 and loaned by
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Historical Miscellanies

Relating to

Long Island

BY

CHARLES J. WERNER

Member of

Long Island Historical Society, Kings County Historical Society,
Suffolk County Historical Society, Huntington Historical Society,
New York Genealogical and Biographical Society.



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HUNTINGTON, LONG ISLAND

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ONE HUNDRED COPIES PRINTED
OF WHICH THIS IS

No.

To my Dear Parents

MR. AND MRS. LUTHER M. WERNER

WHO HAVE AT ALL TIMES OFFERED EVERY AID AND
ENCOURAGEMENT IN MY HISTORICAL ENDEAVORS

THIS BOOK IS

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

BY THE AUTHOR

PREFACE

The following historical sketches were written during odd moments between more serious tasks. They are published because of the author's belief that they will in some small measure help to perpetuate the interesting history of his native Island. The three shorter sketches describing the Schenck House, Carpenter's Tavern and Racing at Hempstead, are reprinted from issues of "The Hempstead Sentinel" in which they first appeared.

Huntington, L. I.

May 31st, 1917

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THE SCHENCK HOMESTEAD
AT MILL ISLAND, FLATLANDS

The Schenck Homestead at Mill Island, Flatlands

NEW YORK STATE'S OLDEST HOUSE

IT is not generally known that the oldest houses in New York State are situated in the city of Brooklyn and are located in the Flatlands, Flatbush, Gravesend and New Utrecht sections. Such, however, is the case and at least some one of these old landmarks should be bought and preserved either by the city or the historical societies, or even by a society formed for that specific purpose.

The Art Commission of the City of New York has recently taken fifty photographs of early landmarks in all five boroughs of the city, in order that an image of them may be had for future generations in case of their destruction. That this fate is imminent may be judged from the fact that at least three in the collection have been torn down since they were photographed by the commission.

A very good beginning along the line of purchase has also been made by the City, which has acquired and preserved the Van Courtlandt manor house at Van Courtlandt Park and lately by the purchase of the Dyckman dwelling on upper Broadway, which, besides being the oldest building in New York City proper, is also the only remaining example of the early Dutch farmhouse on Manhattan Island.

In Brooklyn, however, we have several houses considerably older than the Dyckman place and besides the interest which attaches to them on account of their great age, there is also the added fact that several have been the site of interesting and stirring incidents in connection with our War of Independence.

One in particular is the oldest building in the State and is known as the Schenck homestead. It is located on Mill Island just south of Bergen Beach and was included in the old town of Flatlands.

Jan Martinse Schenck, one of the early settlers of Flatlands, came of a noble Dutch family which had long been prominent in the Low Countries now known as Holland. He emigrated with others of his family in 1650,

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and six years later erected the house which now bears his name and which enjoys the distinction of being the oldest house in our State, with an age of 259 years.

The property is in a good state of preservation in spite of its great age and at the time of my visit was occupied by a tenant. It is a very good example of the farmhouse erected by the Dutch founders of our city. Two stories in height, the windows of the second story on the front are of the dormer variety. Vines completely cover one side of the building and a very comfortable porch looks out towards the surrounding country.

Looking at the front of the house we are first attracted by the pleasant simplicity of the architecture, which is a characteristic of the early Dutch farmhouse. There is a door in the center leading into a hall which runs to the rear of the house. The door is flanked on either side by windows and the roof is continued out over the porch and makes a cover for it. The roof is supported by five pillars. Three dormer windows peer out from the upper story and lend an eerie quaintness to the design. The high peaked roof is surmounted by a single chimney at the extreme end. The old tiles around the hearth are still in place and the sturdy ceiling beams do not show their great age. Some of the beams are held in position by ship's cradles, for it must be known that the Schencks were seafaring men and carried on a brisk trade with the old country.

The vessels owned by the Schencks came in through Jamaica Bay and discharged their cargoes at the Schenck wharf on the island near the house. The idea of using Jamaica Bay as a terminal for transatlantic commerce is, therefore, over 200 years old and one can scarcely realize that a considerable amount of trade existed there at such an early date. Flatlands lost that trade by indifference to its demands and a lack of foresight on the part of the early settlers. It is gratifying to know that the project of improving and deepening Jamaica Bay is to receive the attention it deserves and in the course of time the busy hum of commerce will again be heard over its silent waterways.

Jan Martinse Schenck willed the property to his son, Martin Janse Schenck, whose son, Capt. John Schenck finally became the owner. His heirs sold the property to Joris Martense of Flatbush, who paid £2,300 for the house, mill, docks and about seventy-five acres of land. Martense was a wealthy man and a leading citizen of Flatbush. He secretly advanced \$5,500 to the American cause, while ostensibly favoring the British.

At this time the British troops were in complete control of Long Island, and their officers and men were quartered on the unwilling inhabitants. Major Moncrief occupied Joris Martense's home and was peacefully enjoying his slumbers on the night of June 13, 1778, when he was surprised and captured

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by Capt. William Marriner, who with a small band of Americans made a bold dash from Middletown Point, N. J., to Long Island without attracting the attention of the British, and successfully transported his prisoner, together with others, back to Jersey before the break of dawn. The original intention of Captain Marriner was to capture Colonel Matthews, the Mayor of New York, and Colonel Axtell, his friend, who both resided in Flatbush at that time. Fortunately for these worthies, they had decided to spend that particular evening at New York and so escaped an ignominious capture. However, the Americans apprehended Major Sherwood, Captain Forrester and Theophylact Bache, a well-known Tory, in addition to Major Moncrief, and doubtless felt well satisfied with their raid.

Joris Martense devised the property to his daughter, Susan, who married Patrick Caton. Caton Avenue in Flatbush is named in her honor. Mrs. Caton willed the property to her daughter, the wife of General Philip S. Crooke. After remaining in the Crooke family for some years, it was finally sold to Florence C. Smith, who in turn disposed of it to a real estate concern. The waterways surrounding the Island were dredged out and the property greatly improved by the Atlantic, Gulf and Pacific Company, who finally became the owners when the real estate company, having been affected by the financial panic of 1907, deeded it to them on January 14, 1909. The house is still owned by the Atlantic, Gulf and Pacific Company and is occupied, as has been stated before, by a tenant of the company.

CARPENTER'S TAVERN
AT JAMAICA

Carpenter's Tavern at Jamaica

SCENE OF THE CAPTURE OF GEN. NATHANIEL WOODHULL BY THE BRITISH

ON Fulton Street, east of Jamaica, stands a roadhouse which has been in continuous use for this purpose for a period of 206 years. Historians know of it as Carpenter's Tavern and it was built in 1710 by Increase Carpenter who was afterwards a Lieutenant in the American army during the Revolution.

The old house is not famous for architectural merit or pleasing interior, but it claims celebrity as the scene of a very tragic occurrence—the capture and fatal wounding of General Nathaniel Woodhull by the British.

By August 1st, 1776, the large English army and fleet which in the words of their commanders was “to drive the Rebels into the sea,” anchored in the Lower Bay of New York and the army took up its quarters on Staten Island. Knowing that this move precursed an attack either upon New York or Brooklyn, General Washington divided his forces and sent a considerable number of men to defend the latter town, who took up their position south and southeast of the city and awaited the attack.

They had not long to wait and on the 22nd day of August the British army landed at New Utrecht, south of Brooklyn, and during the interval between the 22nd and the 26th arrayed themselves opposite the Americans. The attack or “Battle of Long Island” as it is called, began in the early morning of August 27th and lasted all that day. On account of superior numbers and aided by a flanking movement from the east, which point had been insufficiently guarded by the Americans, the British were enabled to inflict a severe defeat upon our ancestors and drive them in towards Brooklyn where they made a stand the following day. On the 29th, Washington realized that the position was too weak to be held and during the night conducted his masterly retreat to New York, which gave possession of Long Island to the English.

During the days preceding the battle, General Woodhull had presided over the Provincial Congress at White Plains and following this, had obtained

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leave of absence for a few days to attend to private business at his home at Mastic. While there he received orders to go to Jamaica and take charge of a number of Militia which he would meet at that place. With this force he was to proceed to the western part of Queens County contiguous to the British lines and collect all the cattle, grain and provisions he might find there and transport them eastward to the Hempstead Plains.

With the small force at his disposal, he drove many of the cattle to the plains, and sent messengers to the provincial congress asking for reinforcements, both to finish his task and to render his position more secure against the British who were daily extending their lines closer to his field of activity. The disastrous battle of Long Island, however, delayed the sending of the much needed help and the General was finally put in the position where he could do no more with the small force at his command, now reduced to a scant 100 men by desertions and details to accompany the cattle going eastward.

Still hoping for reinforcements or at least some intelligence from his superiors, on the morning of August 28th, he ordered his small detachment to fall back and take up a position about four miles east of Jamaica on the turnpike, remaining at the village himself in order to receive word of the expected help and to become acquainted with the outcome of the battle fought the day before which would in some measure, have an influence on his movements.

The General remained at Jamaica until late in the afternoon of August 28th, when he slowly withdrew eastward along the turnpike with one or two companions intending to join his command and spend the night with them. Just as he reached the tavern, a severe thunder shower broke and the General determined to take temporary shelter within its walls, and sent his companions on to join the main body. A narrow lane adjacent to the house and at right angles to the turnpike ran up to the heavily wooded heights north of the property, and seemed to offer a quick means of escape, if a roving band of British should chance upon the scene.

Woodhull dismounted and entered the public room, having tied his horse to a fence post in the rear of the tavern. Hardly had he seated himself when a detachment of dragoons and mounted infantry rode furiously up to the entrance in search of the General whose presence in Jamaica had been divulged to the British by Tories.

The shouts of the troopers led on by their Tory guide gave the first intimation to the General that his enemies were upon him. Dashing from the room he sprang towards the rear door secured by a heavy latch. The

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unfastening of this cost him many precious seconds and as he ran towards his horse, in the yard, the soldiers were close upon him.

As he reached his steed the ruffians closed in and the General now at bay, tendered his sword in surrender to the nearest officer. The cowardly wretch not satisfied by this act of submission, demanded in an infuriated voice that his prisoner should pronounce the words "God save the King." The old General in a calm voice replied, "God save us all," whereupon the officer dashed towards him with drawn sabre and rained fierce blows upon his defenceless head and arms, until the old man sank to the ground, fearfully cut and slashed.

The identity of the wretch who committed this wanton act of cruelty is not definitely known but it is admitted that Captain Oliver Delancey, a Tory, was in personal command of the detachment and on him rests the odium of the deed and the resultant death of the General.

From the spot where he fell, he was carried to a maple tree growing near the rear door of the tavern, where he rested for some time, nearly bleeding to death. Finally his captors removed him to Jamaica where his wounds were dressed.

On the following day along with other prisoners, he was carried to New Utrecht and put on board a filthy and loathsome prison-ship where he remained for two weeks without medical attendance of any kind. One of his captors, more humane than the rest, ordered his removal to a house in the village of New Utrecht where he was allowed some medical attention. His wife was sent for and brought with her, provisions and money to be used in caring for her husband.

He lingered on for a day or so longer, and finally passed away on September 20th, 1776, from the effects of his terrible wounds. With his last breath he instructed his wife to distribute the money and provisions among the needy American prisoners.

Thus Long Island's hero died—one who had sacrificed his life to duty and whose last thoughts were for other unfortunates. He is buried at Mastic, L. I.

General Woodhull had served with distinction through the French and Indian War, and it has never been sufficiently explained why a man of his high military attainments was not given a more important post during the events which culminated in the Battle of Long Island.

The old tavern is still much as it was during the Revolution and one can see the hall and heavy door and latch which hindered the General's flight.

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On May 23rd, 1912, the Sons of the Revolution erected a bronze tablet to his memory, near the place of his capture.

Aside from its importance as the scene of the capture, the old house sheltered many of the patriotic meetings held previous to the War of Independence and the first revolutionary gathering on Long Island took place there.

The property is now known as Goetze's Hotel.



HORSE-RACING AT HEMPSTEAD
IN THE OLDEN DAYS

Horse-Racing at Hempstead in the Olden Days

OLD Queens County, which included the territory now known as Nassau, has been the home of horse-racing from the earliest times. The great extent of plain-land found within its borders no doubt was a strong incentive towards the building of race courses on the part of our ancestors. Also, good and abundant pasturage might be had for the asking and level turnpikes even at an early date, spread themselves out like a spider's web over the land.

The neighborhood of Hempstead seems to have found favor very early for this purpose, for in 1665 Gov. Richard Nicoll ordered a race course to be laid out on the Hempstead Plain, south of Hyde Park or "Isle of Trees" as it was then known. The plains in those days were known as "Salisbury Plain," and the name has been fittingly perpetuated by the Salisbury Golf Club. The course known as New Market was quite an ambitious affair and was the meeting place of those who were sportingly inclined.

It is interesting to note that the project was established, in the words of the Governor, "for encouraging the bettering of the breed of horses, which, through great neglect has been impaired," an argument which is still used to justify the practise of racing with its attendant evil of gambling.

Governor Francis Lovelace succeeded Nicoll in 1668 and patronized the course in no uncertain manner. He proclaimed that trials of speed should take place in May of each year and "that subscriptions be taken up of all such as were disposed to run for a crown of silver or the value thereof in wheat."

Daniel Denton in his "Brief Description of New York," published in 1670, and a very famous book by the way, says: "Toward the middle of Long Island lyeth a plain 16 miles long and 4 broad, where you will find neither stick nor stone to hinder the horses heels, or endanger them in their races, and once a year the best horses in the island are brought hither to try their swiftness, and the swiftest rewarded with a silver cup, two being annually procured for that purpose." He might have said the best horses in the province, for New Market was known and patronized from Boston to Philadelphia and its fame reached even to England.

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The book from which the above extract was taken is the first work on the colony of New York written in the English language. It is excessively rare and when a copy is offered for sale it generally fetches over \$1,000. The author, a son of Rev. Richard Denton, Hempstead's first minister, came with his father from Stamford to this village in 1644. He was a prominent man in the colony and became a magistrate at Jamaica in later life.

We do not know exactly how long the course was in existence, but Thompson in his "History of Long Island" states that it was in great favor for over a hundred years, but finally abandoned for one nearer to New York—probably at Beaver Pond, Jamaica, or the track at Newtown.

Now comes a lapse in racing at Hempstead until about 1827 when the old Washington Course was established, northwest of the village. The location is plainly marked on Walling's Map of 1859; the track lying in a triangle formed by Cherry Valley Road, old Washington Avenue and an unnamed road. As far as can be ascertained from a comparison of old maps with modern surveys, the spot was a little east of the present Cathedral Avenue, near the boundary line of Hempstead and Garden City.

The course was on the open plains, unfenced, and consequently no admission was charged, and the purses were made up by offerings from the crowd, dropped into a hat or glass passed around.

Trotting races were very popular and the owners generally drove their own horses to the track, starting from home in the morning, arriving at Hempstead at noontime and trotting all afternoon. The judges' stand was a very crude affair with a bar occupying the ground floor where the enthusiasts were wont to "take a little lick" after each heat.

When the afternoon's sport was over a wild scurry to get home first took place and many a bet was laid on the horse and driver who would first reach Stephen Hewlett's hotel at Main and Front Streets.

Two, three and four mile heats were the order of the day in those times and a horse's endurance and stamina were often put to a severe test.

In 1841 took place the famous trot against time from Brooklyn to Montauk Point, the result of a wager between Isaac Willets of Hempstead and Gilbert B. Miller of Brooklyn; that the former could drive a team over this distance in twenty-four hours. Mr. Willets drove a team belonging to the Curtis family of stage-line fame; won his bet and accomplished the task in twenty-three hours and two minutes.

This was considered "sport" in those days, but we are of the opinion that present day horsemen would call it something pretty close to cruelty.

Racing in the "forties" and earlier, drew a pretty rough crowd from all accounts and was attended with a great deal of gambling and worse evils.

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The "sport of kings" in spite of its great popularity did not seem to find much favor with the historians. Benjamin F. Thompson, speaking of the Washington Course in a letter written in 1827 to his father-in-law at Setauket, Rev. Zachariah Greene, the "fighting parson" of Revolutionary days, says: "Hempstead will encourage little else but horse-racing, and of this we are likely to have enough, as it is reported that Union Course is to be given up and a course for horse-racing established near this village. Hempstead will of course be thronged with that sort of gentry, persons more brutish than the horses they ride."

The course was in existence for many years and served to make Hempstead quite a centre for the sport.

For a further account of racing on Long Island we would refer the reader to Thomas Floyd-Jones' "Backward Glances," from which certain particulars of the Washington Course have been taken.



WILLIAM S. MOUNT AND HIS ART



HOME OF WILLIAM S. MOUNT, STONY BROOK, L. I.

William S. Mount and His Art

AMONG the list of American artists the name of William Sidney Mount stands forth as the most successful depicter of the happy side of American country life. Almost all of his canvases tell a story of the rural life of the first half of the last century—of the “good old days” when the homely joys of the farm were experienced—when straw rides and hay frolics were the order of the day. Indeed, the mere titles of his paintings bring us back to the life and joys of our grandfathers.

The scenes of most of his paintings are laid on Long Island, many of them near his home at Stony Brook. Thus they preserve to us an image of the landscape and customs of bygone days and, aside from their acknowledged artistic supremacy, are interesting to all lovers of our Island from a historical standpoint. He was, and is in truth, Long Island's artist.

He was born on November 26th, 1807, at Setauket, where his father followed the occupation of farming and also kept an inn. He was one of five children and the youngest of four brothers.

His father, Thomas Shepard Mount, was married at Setauket in 1801 and his name first appears on the town records during that year. It is likely that he came to the locality several years previous, but the family were not original settlers, nor is it known that any other individual of the name lived on the Island previous to his coming. A brother, John S. Mount, also lived at Setauket, and the two brothers married sisters, as will appear later.

Thomas S. Mount, on December 23rd, 1801, married Julia, daughter of Major Jonas Hawkins, of Stony Brook, son of Eleazer 2nd, grandson of Eleazer 1st. and great-grandson of Zachariah Hawkins, who was one of the original proprietors of the town of Brookhaven, settled in 1655, of which Stony Brook and Setauket are villages. Zachariah lived at Setauket and so did his son Eleazer until 1757, when he removed to the neighboring village of Stony Brook and built the large house which later became the home of the Mounts. Another daughter of Major Jonas, Dorothy, married John S. Mount, as before intimated.

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Thomas S. Mount and Julia Hawkins, his wife, had five children: 1st, Henry Smith, born October 9th, 1802; married Mary Ford, December 21st, 1826, and died January 10th, 1841. 2nd, Shepard Alonzo (who sometimes signed his name Alonzo S.), born July 17th, 1804; married Elizabeth H., sister of Charles L. Elliott, himself a noted artist, October 5th, 1837, and died September 18th, 1868. 3rd, Robert Nelson, born February 10th, 1806; married Mary Brewster; died March 7th, 1883. 4th, William Sidney, born November 26th, 1807, and died unmarried November 19th, 1868. 5th, Ruth, born December 25th, 1808; married Charles S. Seabury, December 25th, 1826.

While William S. Mount was still in his childhood the family removed to the Hawkins homestead at Stony Brook, the home of his mother's family which has since been known as the Mount house. Many of his most famous paintings were executed in the old studio in the attic.

The house itself is very interesting, but more of that later. In 1824 at the age of seventeen he went to New York and became associated with his brother, Henry S. Mount, as a sign-painter, but a capacity for a much higher order of art soon became evident. Mount was elected an associate of the National Academy in 1831 and an academician in 1832. His paintings soon made their appearance in the important galleries and exhibitions and his fame spread while yet a young man. After a few years in the city, he returned to Stony Brook and applied himself to his art for the rest of his life.

Mount's art was appreciated during his life and since his death the full realization of his genius is apparent to us. The mature judgment of time points to the human note in his pictures, which seems to reach out and make us live among the people and scenes we are looking at. He injects a fine sense of humor and happiness in many of his canvases.

His first picture, a portrait of himself, was painted in 1828 and was quickly followed by two compositions, "Christ Raising the Daughter of Jairus" and "Saul and the Witch of Endor," both exhibited the same year at the National Academy, where they were very favorably commented upon.

It was an anxious time for the young artist and the waiting family in the country. Much depended on what reception the public would afford his efforts, and when the "criticks" finally came to them and fastened their stamp of approval on his first efforts, young Mount felt that a great deal had been accomplished and that a good start had been

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made in his chosen profession. Even before any paintings had been exhibited, no lurking doubt or suspicion that his work would not be appreciated ever entered the minds of his kin and an extract from a letter written by a brother, Robert Nelson Mount, then only twenty-two, is both interesting and prophetic:

"You promised to give me an account of the reviews of the National Academy of Design, or rather tell me what was said about brother Henry's and William's paintings by the criticks, but you have not done it, and I fear it is because they did not compliment them very highly. Admitting that to be the case, I should hope that brother William would not be discouraged—Henry I know would not. I think that there is not a doubt that William will take a stand among the first of his profession (and I may add) a stand that will be unrivalled by those of his contemporaries that now look upon him with seeming indifference. I do not say this to flatter brother Bill; the proof he has already given us of his ability as a designer is sufficient to make me think as I do.

"Ambition (it is said) is the cause of eminence. He has that and is also persevering in whatever he undertakes; more so, brother Shep, I think, than you are. Excuse me for this remark, I was led to make it, fearing that for the want of perseverance you might give up a business that in a few years by diligent study you might almost be master of. He that would excel (says Sir Joshua Reynolds) must not lay his pencil aside when it ceases to amuse, but on the contrary must go to work willing or unwilling, morning, noon and night and will find it no play, but very hard work."

In 1830 Mount painted and exhibited "The Country Dance," sometimes called "The Rustic Dance," a bit of humorous rural life which instantly attracted universal attention. The quick success of the picture plainly indicated to the young artist that the portrayal of the happy side of country life was the road along which fame beckoned. It was the outward and visible sign of the artist's humorously philosophical nature. He knew and loved the country folk and could portray with a master hand their homely joys and amusements. As is further evidenced by his correspondence and by those few friends of his who are still among us, the artist had a pronounced vein of humor and everyone of his paintings of this type tells a story.

We append herewith a letter written to his brother, Robert Nelson Mount, shortly after the first appearance of his "Country Dance":

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N. York, May 29, 1830.

BROTHER NELSON—

I have a plenty of business. I am painting the portraits of the Rev. Mr. Onderdonk* and Mr. Thompson, the architect, etc. I shall be up home as soon as I paint three or four more and some landscapes from nature. My Country Dance attracts great attention; I will give you a copy of a criticism on the pictures, he blows them up like fun, we can't find him out—published in pamphlet form. I have sold my Cottage.†

“Mount's little girl from Cottage comes;
In nature's tints she lovely blooms,
Whilst o'er her head the willow tree,
Waves as it should, so droopingly.
He leads us up a Rustic Dance,
Such things are better done in France,
But this shall keep no under station,
It shows some scenes within the nation.

“Take nature for a guide and she
Will show what wants variety.
Study good composition well,
One day in this; thou may'st excel,
In harmony more thy colours blend.
I speak as't were to any friend
Who leaves them now, in hopes to see
Still better things next year from thee.”

Shepard is gone up Country. Aunt Hawkins is in town. Grand-mother will be up next trip. Wrote in a hurry, burn up my letter.

Yours, etc.,

W. S. MOUNT.

Luckily for the historian the last admonition was not followed out and this interesting letter has been preserved to us.

“The Farmer's Noonning,” executed in 1837, is one of Mount's best works; representing the noon hour of relaxation and refreshment among the farmer and his hands working in a distant field, too far away from

* Bishop Benjamin T. Onderdonk, fourth Bishop of the Episcopal diocese of New York, elected 1830.

† His painting, “Girl and Cottage.”

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the homestead to admit of their returning for the mid-day repast. It was purchased by Jonathan Sturges, a well-known merchant and art patron of the day, and is now owned by his son, Mr. Frederick Sturges. The scene is a somewhat lofty point on the Mount farm at Stony Brook, with vistas of the neighboring country. It can be readily recognized by one who will take the trouble to stand on the same spot today.

In this connection many of Mount's most famous canvases depict scenes on his farm and especially is this true of the large barn which is still standing. "The Power of Music," the artist's best genre composition, portrays an impromptu concert with eager listeners, staged in the wide main chamber, galleried with bulging hay and flanked by two huge doors.

Mr. Henry C. Sturges, of New York City, another son of Jonathan, owns "Wringing the Pigs" and "Who'll Turn the Grindstone?"

While on the subject of patrons we must not omit to mention Luman Reed, an opulent merchant who died in 1836, and the chief encourager of American art during his lifetime. He was a warm friend of Mount's and besides giving him several commissions, sought to interest himself in the artist and thus encourage him to greater efforts. Mr. Reed lived at 13 Greenwich Street, the third story of which building he used as a picture gallery and to which the public was admitted one day a week and his friends at all times. At his death the paintings were purchased by friends, with a view to keeping them intact, and thus originated The New York Gallery of Fine Arts, which finally went out of existence after a checkered career of twelve years. Eighty of the paintings belonging to the Gallery were acquired by the New York Historical Society in 1858 and among these are three examples by Mount: "Truant Gamblers," owned by Mr. Reed; "Bargaining for a Horse," presented by the elder Sturges, and "The Fortune Teller," presented by the artist. The figures in the last mentioned work are portraits of Mrs. Amelia Longbotham, as fortune teller, and Edna Bostwick, as a young girl. Mrs. Longbotham was a neighbor of the artist's on Long Island, and Miss Bostwick, evidently a friend. A sequel picture to "Bargaining for a Horse" is "Coming to the Point," in the New York Public Library, the two depicting an old-fashioned horse trade. The latter was presented to the Library by R. L. Stuart.

Mr. Robert Gilmore, of Baltimore, a member of an illustrious and wealthy family of that vicinity, was another patron, and for him the artist painted two pictures that we know of, "Boy Getting Over a Fence" and the "Bar-room Oracle," the last, in spite of its title, being one of Mount's

best works. We will let him describe it in his own words, as written to Mr. Gilmor:

"The man puffing out his smoke is a regular built Long Island tavern and store keeper, who amongst us is often a General, or Judge, or Postmaster, or what you may please as regards standing in society, and as you say, has quite the air of a Citizen.

"The man standing wrapped in his cloak is a traveller as you supposed, and is in no way connected with the rest, only waiting the arrival of the stage. He appears to be listening to what the old man is saying.

"I designed the picture as a conversation piece; the principal interest to be centered in the old invalid who certainly talks with much zeal. I have placed him in a particular chair which he is always supposed to claim by right of possession, being but seldom out of it from the 'rising to the going down of the sun.' A kind of Bar-room Oracle, chief umpire during all seasons of warm debate, whether religious, moral or political, and first taster of every new barrel of cider rolled in the cellar; a glass of which he now holds in his hand while he is entertaining his young landlord with the longest story he is ever supposed to tell, having fairly tired out every other frequenter of the establishment.

"I agree with you in the opinion that it is my most finished performance."

Mount was a close friend of Benjamin F. Thompson, the renowned historian of Long Island, as were, in fact, the entire Mount family. The artist and author had much in common and each appreciated the chosen profession of the other. A very good reproduction of the well-known portrait of Thompson by Mount may be found as a frontispiece in the third edition of "Thompson's History of Long Island," recently published under the editorial supervision of the author of this article.

The artist visited Hempstead as the historian's guest in 1834, when the portrait was painted, and again in 1837. During these visits Mrs. Thompson's likeness was also portrayed, and also those of several other prominent Hempsteadites of that time, among whom may be mentioned Rev. Zachariah Greene, "the fighting parson" (Thompson's father-in-law); Rev. William M. Carmichael, rector of St. George's Church, and William H. Barroll, a prominent merchant. The Thompson and Greene portraits are owned by Miss Julia H. Thompson, of Hempstead, who is a grand-daughter of the historian. In the writer's opinion, the portraits of Thompson and his wife are done in the artist's most pleasing manner and he does not hesitate to pronounce them the best example of Mount's work as a portrait painter. Unfortunately, the engraving of Mr. Thomp-

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son's likeness which was inserted in the second edition of his "History," published in 1843, is a rather poor copy and does this beautiful painting scant justice—indeed the engraver took upon himself the license to interject into his work a hand clasping a book, which serves very well to indicate the subject's literary proclivities, but which does not occur in the original. The head and face, most important in any portrait, are here the worst done part of the whole picture. It is therefore doubly fortunate that a correct photographic reproduction of the portrait is now exhibited in the new edition.

While on this subject we may say that William S. Mount executed many excellent portraits of well-known personages of his time and there are some who go as far as to say that his fame should chiefly rest on these. A likeness of General Jeremiah Johnson hangs in the Brooklyn City Hall and a portrayal of Bishop B. T. Onderdonk hung in the Chapel of Columbia College many years ago and is very probably still owned and exhibited by that institution.

Mrs. M. B. L. Jergenson, of Setauket, is the fortunate possessor of three portraits by our artist, namely: General John R. Satterly, Mrs. John R. Satterly and one of her grandfather, Samuel L. Thompson, brother of Benjamin F., before mentioned. General Satterly was an officer of Militia and postmaster of his native village of Setauket.

A likeness of Judge Selah B. Strong, of Setauket, is owned by his descendants residing on Strong's Neck, Setauket, as is also a landscape of the Neck by the same artist. Of this composition Shepard Mount, writing to Benjamin F. Thompson, says: "Mr. Strong is much pleased with William's portrayal of the Neck—wherein he can behold so many objects so familiar to his vision during the years of his childhood."

For an enumeration of other accomplishments in the line of portraiture, we would refer the reader to the catalogue of the artist's work at the end of this article.

Before leaving this topic we are going to append for the reader's edification a letter written by the artist to his brother Nelson, in which some interesting and humorous observations are mentioned.

New York,
42 Chatham Street,
March 6th, 1860.

BROTHER NELSON—

I have painted five portraits in South Brooklyn at the residence of Mrs. Becar.* I painted her late husband from memory (he left no

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likeness), he has been dead over three years. I am now painting a whole length of a girl aged two years, from a sketch which I took after death—daughter of Nathaniel Marsh on Staten Island. The parents think the likeness perfect. The sail to and from the Island is delightful. Steamers and sail vessels in constant motion adding beauty to the scene.

We agree with you; we do not believe in the treating system. If you know of any habitual tippler, advise him to use New Orleans molasses as a substitute, and it will cure him in six weeks' time from a strong desire for liquor. I will pay for the first gallon!

Shepard is painting the portrait of a lady in 27th Street New York. I have written this letter in great haste,

Yours very truly,

WM. S. MOUNT.

Several interesting stories are told of Mount, which serve to show his true artistic temperament. The following concerning him appeared in the New York Evening Post shortly after his death:

"A lady spoke of his coming into a room while she was amusing herself with a pet spaniel which had been taught to sit in an upright position. The attitude of the dog impressed the artist and he essayed to sketch him. Just as he had completed everything except the position of one leg, the animal dropped and could not be persuaded to assume the position again. Disappointedly, Mount closed his sketch book and announced the sketch to be spoiled. In vain the lady urged him to supply the little required from memory. He would not risk falsehood in a single line or hair."

As an instance of his neglect of pecuniary matters, a common trait of artists by the way, we may relate the following from the same source:

"A young and prosperous merchant of New York wished Mount to paint his portrait. While they were engaged in conversation on the subject the merchant remarked: 'After all, Mr. Mount, you must admit that Art would be nothing without money. Your motive for painting my picture is the price I pay you.' 'My friend,' said Mount, 'I am very sorry you said that—not that I am offended—I am not. But after such an observation I could not paint your picture.' Explanations were useless. The picture was never painted."

Shepard Alonzo Mount, three years older than William S., was himself a portrait painter of no mean ability. He executed a very good like-

* Mrs. Noel J. Becar, residing at Henry and Warren Streets, Brooklyn.

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ness of his more famous brother, also one of Rear Admiral Theodorus Bailey and of J. D. Hewlett. Several very creditable examples of still life are also from his brush.

Shepard Mount, though mostly self-taught, was a man of broad education and was possessed of those finer sensibilities of mind and nature which are generally attributed to the poet or divine. He had the rare power to adequately portray his thoughts either through brush and canvas or with the literary pen. As an example of the latter gift we shall exhibit to the reader his poem entitled "The Old Double Door," which door is still to be seen at the Mount Homestead at Stony Brook. The verses originally appeared in the "Independent Press," published at Stony Brook from 1865 to 1868:

THE OLD DOUBLE DOOR

BY SHEPARD A. MOUNT.

I am gray-haired now, but I still can see,
This old hall door as it looked to me
In early life—when a wild young boy,
I o'er it bounded with mirthful joy.
I often think with a dreamy eye
Of those golden hours so long gone by;
Of that sweet sleep I shall know no more
At the sunny side of this old hall door;
The Old Double Door, the broad panel door,
And the long iron hinges it turned on of yore.

The home of my childhood, is home to me still,
Though shadows have passed o'er the time worn sill;
The faces have vanished that made it dear,
And lights have gone out that once shone here.
Yet, all is not darkness, while loved ones are nigh
To look out with me on the deep solemn sky,
And commune with the dead on that far off shore,
Now gone forever from our old hall door.

How kindly it swung at the beggar's call,
When the tread of my Mother was heard in the hall;
How gently it closed when they chose to depart,
By the same dear hand, and a trusting heart.

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Alas! for the changes that meet our return;
Now, the tall grass bends to the willow and urn—
And vainly we listen to hear once more,
The voice that governed the old hall door.

O'er the dark gray roof, and trailed to the ground,
The wild trumpet creepers profusely abound,
Studded all o'er with their waving flowers,
Where the humming-birds sport in the scarlet bowers;
To this beautiful home of my infant life,
When my heart grows tired of its toilsome strife,
Then weary I come to see once more
The forms of the past at our old hall door.

Faithful old door, I no more may renew
The joys of the past so familiar to you; .
The dearest of all, she returns here no more
To brighten the shadows of clouds gone before.
No elastic rubber, nor springs of steel,
Ever force you against the stranger's heel;
And thus-and-ever—I trust you will be,
Thrown open to all who may journey to thee.
The Old Double Door, the broad panel door,
And the long iron hinges it turned on of yore.

The following letter written to his friend, Benjamin F. Thompson, is also interesting as depicting an old-fashioned Fourth of July Celebration.

New York, Dec. 21, 1840.

MY HIGHLY RESPECTED FRIEND:

I feel honored in the reception of your letter. As a family of Brothers we are fully sensible of, and I trust truly thankful for, the interest you evince in our welfare. We consider you not as an acquaintance of recent date but an early friend, and the friend of our Father, ever stimulating us to acts and acquirements which if obtained, would make us honorable and useful in this wicked world. The mention of my Father's name conveys me back to my boyhood when our national jubilee used to be celebrated with such joyous festivity in old Setauket when Doct. Franklin (as we boys then called you) was the Orator of the day and when Capt. Mount used to march in front of the Artillery and order out the big-gun to send forth

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its notes o'er hill and vale reminding us with a voice of thunder the price of our liberty. Then stood pretty girls upon their tip-toes with hands pressed upon their ears, to avoid the shock gazing with wonder at the more daring boys who in defiance of Military authority cut up their capers even at the cannons mouth. Since then many years have passed and you have become the reputed historian of our own native Isle. As you desire it I will inform you I was born at Setauket on the 17th day of July, 1804. And in my 25th year commenced the art of painting. The notice you have been pleased to make of me in your first edition suits me with the exception that you have represented me as an artist too favorably. In these Daguerreotype days the works of painters must be subjected to a closer scrutiny. The great will quickly rise the poor must fall. A portrait I have recently painted, might convince you of an improvement; my efforts hereafter must be to merit what you have already said rather than intimate a desire for further praises.

Of Uncle Micah Hawkins* I know nothing in particular that would aid you in a biographical sketch of his character or ability more than you are already acquainted with, both, from personal knowledge and familiar correspondence. Brother Henry as you have anticipated will not remain long with us, he continues failing. I should not at any moment be surprised to hear of his Death. Please give my respects to Mrs. Thompson.

Yours truly

S. A. MOUNT.

P. S. Probably you will receive a letter from Brother William in a few days, whatever it may contain concerning me you can insert in your new volume, at your discretion. I shall immediately call upon some of Uncle Micah's old associates hoping they can communicate something to you, of him, that will be interesting.

S. A. M.

Shepard Mount's melancholy prediction in regard to his brother Henry was soon fulfilled and this estimable gentleman died January 10th, 1841, in the thirty-ninth year of his age. Henry Mount, when still a youth, journeyed to New York and apprenticed himself to Lewis Childs, as a sign-painter. He later set up for himself in this line and also executed many meritorious paintings which were exhibited at the National Acad-

* Micah Hawkins was the author of "The Saw-Mill," the first American opera to be successfully produced. It enjoyed quite a lengthy run at Wallack's Chatham Theatre, New York, in 1824. Hawkins was born in the Mount house at Stony Brook, January 1st, 1777, and died in New York, July 29th, 1825.

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emy and at Clinton Hall. It was to him that William S. Mount first went to learn his trade as a sign-painter, and from his amiable brother the soon-to-be-famous artist first received the rudiments of design.

Shepard Mount died on the 18th of September, 1868, in his sixty-fifth year, and was followed to the Great Beyond by his brother William, just thirty-one days afterwards. All three brothers are buried in the Presbyterian Church Yard at Setauket, a neighboring village.

Now let us turn to the old Mount homestead at Stony Brook. It was built in 1757 and is surrounded by box-wood as old as the house. The dwelling, large even for today, is two and a half stories in height. As we approach the front door our attention is attracted by an ancient knocker in the form of a goddess's face, carefully tinted by the artist, and underneath it the family name is painted. Many examples of Mount's work hang on the walls, but the goal of our steps is the studio on the top floor; in practically the same state as when death called its occupant away forty-eight years ago. Many pictures fill the room. In one corner you will find the easel and in another a music stand, for it must be remembered that he was a musician also. A violin of curious design is carefully inscribed: "Invented by Wm. S. Mount, N. A.," and is still in its case as he left it.

Speaking of music, it should be noted that quite a few of his paintings introduce some form of it as a central theme, such as "The Power of Music," which is considered his best genre composition. The old time negro is often brought in, too, and critics are agreed that Mount was the first American artist to make a serious study of negro physiognomy and character.

The house is a very good example of colonial architecture and most of the hardware on doors, etc., is hand-wrought, such as hinges and latches. In the front hall is a saddle bin where occupants and visitors were wont to throw their saddles after dismounting at the doorstep; their steeds being led to the stable for refreshment and attention. A musket closet also exists and the observing visitor cannot fail to notice several smoke holes over the doors, through which that part of the smoke from open fireplaces which did not go up the chimneys could find an exit.

Henry S. Mount painted a picture in oils of Stony Brook Harbor on a horizontal panel in one of the parlor doors. It is still in existence on the door and it was Mount's intention to paint other local scenes on similar panels in the remaining doors, but his untimely death prevented.

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As it was, the picture was completed during his last winter on earth. The treatment of the panel is certainly unique and merits special mention.

Passing into the kitchen we are at once struck by the enormous fireplace, over six feet broad and almost as deep. Within it is the usual crane from which are still suspended hooks, skewers, pots and other implements necessary for roasting or cooking—not omitting a curling iron for the ladies. As you face the fireplace, just to the right, is an ancient seat or bench which was the favorite resting place of a privileged slave known as Cain. Since then it has always been called Cain's seat and is one of the first objects pointed out to visitors.

The old barn which is portrayed in several of William S. Mount's best pictures is still standing and its hand-hewn timbers are good for many years more.

The estate now consists of sixty-three acres, but under the ownership of the Hawkins was considerably larger. It is said that twenty-two slaves were on the place when manumission was effected in New York State. The remains of a slave cemetery can be discerned on an eminence northeast from the barn.

Stony Brook is only two hours from New York by motor and both the art-lover and historian will be well repaid by a visit to this historic house and home of Long Island's foremost artist.

Appended herewith is a list of his paintings, both portraits and otherwise. It is not complete, but will give a good idea of the scope of his work and should be included in any attempt at writing a sketch of the artist:

Bargaining for a Horse	A Glimpse of Long Island Sound
Cracking Nuts	Flowers
Old Family Burying Ground	Cherries
Primitive Times	Setauket Harbor
Old Kitchen Fireplace	Strong's Neck (1846)
Waiting for the Tide to Fall	Old Homestead at Stony Brook
A Truthful Bit of Long Island	(1868)
Scenery	Resting on the Oars
An Afternoon in Autumn	Mill Dam at Madison, Greene Co.
Waiting for the Packet	Five O'clock in the Morning
Eaton's Neck	Early Spring
Long Island Sound	Coming from the Orchard
On the Hudson	Card Players
Snowballing	Swapping Hats

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Mill at Stony Brook
 Washington Crossing the Alle-
 ghany on a Raft
 Catching the Tune
 Dawn of Day (1868)
 Banjo Player (1858)
 Power of Music (1847)
 Music is Contagious
 The Mower
 Bouquet of Beauty
 Christ Raising Daughter of Jairus
 (1828)
 Saul and Witch of Endor (1828)
 The Country Dance (1830)
 The Raffle (1837)
 Raffling for a Goose
 The Courtship
 The Tough Story
 Farmers Husking Corn
 Farmers Nooning (1836)
 Undutiful Boys
 Fortune Teller
 Cider Making on Long Island
 (1840)
 Truant Gamblers
 Coming to the Point
 Walking the Crack
 Sportsman's Last Visit (1835)
 Wringing the Pigs
 Lucky Throw
 Boys Trapping (1839)
 Dance of the Haymakers (1845)
 Children with Bird's Nest (1844)
 Turn of the Leaf (1849)
 Who'll Turn the Grindstone (1851)
 California News
 Right and Left
 Just in Time (1860)
 Early Impressions are Lasting
 (1864)

Mutual Respect (1868)
 The "Herald" in the Country
 Banjo Player in the Barn
 Bar-room Oracle
 Boy Getting Over the Fence (prior
 to 1836)
 Negro Asleep in the Harvest Place
 (prior to 1837)
 Boy Sitting with a Book in His
 Hands, Surrounded by Flowers
 (1840)
 Girl and Cottage (ca. 1830)
 Early Recollections of Fishing
 Blackberry Girls
 Disappointed Bachelor
 Boy Hoeing Corn
 Girl Asleep
 Boys Hustling Coppers
 The Ramblers
 The Novice
 Loss and Gain
 Farmer Whetting His Scythe
 Any Fish Today?
 Spring Bouquet
 The Tease
 Esquimaux Dog
 Male Head

Portraits

Mrs. Blydenburgh (1846)
 James Rivington
 Gen. Francis B. Spinola
 Gen. Jeremiah Johnson
 Gen. John R. Satterly
 Mrs. John R. Satterly
 Bishop B. T. Onderdonk (1830)
 Judge Selah B. Strong
 Daniel Webster
 Rev. Dr. William M. Carmichael
 (1837)

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William H. Barroll (1837)	Shepard A. Mount (1838)
Benjamin F. Thompson (1834)	Thomas S. Mount (1855)
Mrs. Benjamin F. Thompson (1834)	Architect Thompson (ca. 1830)
Rev. Zachariah Greene	William Wickham Mills
William S. Mount (1828)	Misses Russell
William S. Mount (1854)	Capt. M. C. Perry, U. S. N.
Samuel L. Thompson	Edward H. Nicoll
Nina Mount	Mrs. Edward H. Nicoll
Noel J. Becar	Solomon Nicoll
Infant daughter of Nathaniel Marsh	Rev. Zachariah Greene, with Bust of Washington
Mrs. Julia Mount	W. A. Jones
Henry S. Mount (1828)	

Dates where given indicate year in which picture was painted.



THE THOMPSON HOMESTEAD
AT SETAUKET



THOMPSON HOMESTEAD, SETAUKET, L. I.

The Thompson Homestead at Setauket

BIRTHPLACE OF BENJAMIN F. THOMPSON, HISTORIAN OF LONG ISLAND—ALSO SOME ACCOUNT OF THOSE MEMBERS OF THE THOMPSON FAMILY WHO LIVED THERE

SETAUKET, the first settlement within the confines of the present town of Brookhaven, was established in 1655, and in the following year John and Anthony Thompson settled here; coming first from New Haven to Easthampton and from there to Setauket. John was born June 3rd, 1609, and became one of the original proprietors of the town of Brookhaven. He died October 14th, 1688, aged 79, and was the first ancestor of that branch of the family living on Long Island. John's youngest son, Samuel, was born March 4th, 1668, and died July 14th, 1749, aged 81. On November 6th, 1709, he married Hannah, widow of John Muncy, and daughter of Rev. Nathaniel Brewster, the first installed minister of the gospel at Setauket.

By this marriage he became possessed of the property of his wife, located on the main road leading into Setauket from the south. The date of Samuel's marriage, to our mind, fixes the period when the homestead was erected. It is very typical of the class of dwellings erected during the first part of the eighteenth century or the last part of the seventeenth. No mention is made of the property after Samuel's marriage, except to say that it descended from father to son, and we think that such a careful compiler as the historian would have mentioned the fact if a new dwelling had been erected. Samuel was a farmer, who lived and died in Setauket. Old documents show that he spelled his name "Tomson" or "Tompson," which was changed to "Thompson" by the next generation.

As early wills are always interesting and give an insight into the lives led by our ancestors, we will insert at the proper points in this narrative the wills of the three earliest owners of the Thompson homestead. The last will and testament of Samuel Tompson, the first owner, is here-with appended:

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WILL OF SAMUEL TOMPSON—1745

In the name of God Amen I, Samuel Tompson of Brookhaven in Suffolk County on Long Island in the province of New York Gentleman being in health of body and of sound and disposing mind and memory for which I thank my good and gracious God for the same yet calling to mind the uncertainty of this frail Life and the certainty of death doe make this my last will and testament in manner and form following first and principally I commend my soul to God my Creator trusting and relying in his Mercy through Christ my Saviour for Salvation and my mortal Body I recommend to the earth to be decently Buried in such manner as my Executors hereafter named in their discretion shall think fit and for such worldly substance and estate as God of his great Goodness hath blessed me with I give devise and bequeath the same in manner and form following that is to say Imprimis I give and bequeath to my dearly beloved wife Hannah Tompson all my moveable estate of Cattle Sheep household goods and Furniture what kind or quality soever together with the Sole use and benefit of and in my dwelling House and Barn without any Molestation with the use and benefit and improvement of all and singular my Lands thats now in my possession except such part and parts as I have hereinafter otherwise bequeath To Have and to hold the same unto my said loving Wife for and during the term of her natural life my said moveable Estate of Cattle Sheep household goods and furniture to be disposed of at her death as is hereafter particularly mentioned. Item I give devise and bequeath unto my son Jonathan Tompson all my horses plows Charts and all my farming tackling together with all my stock of Cattle and Sheep to be possessed and enjoyed by him after his mother's decease also my servant Sharper (not to be sold) to have and to hold the same unto my said son Jonathan and to his heirs and assigns forever Item I give and bequeath to my daughter Mary two Silver Spoons also a Negro girl called Sylvia and to her heirs and assigns forever Item I give and bequeath to my eldest daughter Sarah two Silver Spoons and to her heirs and assigns forever Item I give and bequeath to my daughter Deborah her heirs and assigns forever my Negro girl called Priscilla also my two Silver Spoons. Item I give and bequeath to my daughter Susanna heirs and assigns forever two silver spoons also my servant

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Jenny she paying to my Executors hereafter mentioned fifteen pounds Item I give and bequeath to my Grandson Samuel Tompson, the son of Jonathan my Silver Tankard Item I give and bequeath to my Grand-daughter Mary Tompson my chest of drawers Item it is my will that all my other household Goods and furniture after my loving wifes decease be equally divided between my five daughters Sarah, Mary, Deborah Ruth and Sussanah to continue and be to them and their Exrs. and assigns respectively forever. Item it is my will that my servant priscilla shall be free to choose her a Master or Mistress to live with any of my children as she shall think fit Item it is my will and I do hereby appoint my Executors hereafter mentioned to sell my two negro Children Frank and Tony and the money arising thereby together with the fifteen pounds be paid by my daughter Susanah and what money I have now by me put out to interest which sum and sums of money together with all other sum and sums of money in anywise due or owing to me I give and bequeath the same unto the children of five daughters Sarah Mary deborah Ruth and Susanah to be equally divided between them share and share alike to be paid them as they shall respectively come to age by my Executors which said sums to each and every of them so to be paid shall be and continue to them and their respective heirs and assigns for ever and if it should happen that any of them doe dye before age then his her or their part or parts shall be equally divided among those that shall survive. And lastly I do hereby Nominate Constitute and appoint my loving son Jonathan Tompson, daniel Smith and Thomas Strong of Brookhaven the only sole Executors of this my last Will and testament and I do hereby revoke all others heretofore by me made.

In witness whereof I the said Samuel Tompson have to this my last Will and Testament sett my hand and seal this twenty-third day of April in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and forty-five.

SAMUEL TOMPSON (L. S.)

Signed Sealed delivered and declared by the said Samuel Tompson as his last will and testament in the presence of us the subscribers

JOHN TOOKER

DANIEL REEVE

ARTHUR BUCHANAN.

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The next owner was Jonathan, eldest son of Samuel, who was born October 25th, 1710; married Mary, daughter of Richard and Mary Woodhull, and died June 5th, 1786, aged 75. Jonathan became proprietor of all his father's real estate by devise and was born and died in the old house. He filled the office of Justice of the Peace for many years and was a leading man in the town most of his life. As the historian says, "He lived to see the object of his highest wishes fulfilled; the independence of his country and the prosperity of his family." During the Revolution he served in Colonel Smith's Regiment and in Colonel Drake's Provisional Regiment. He also signed the Association of Suffolk County, which pledged its subscribers to Support the Continental Congress—the governing body during our War for Independence.

WILL OF JONATHAN THOMPSON—Dated March 15th, 1783

In the Name of God Amen the fifteenth day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred & eighty three I Jonathan Thompson of Brookhaven in the County of Suffolk and Province of New York having my understanding good & being of perfect mind and memory thanks be given to God therefor and calling to mind the mortality of my body and that it is appointed for all men once to die Do make and ordain this present writing to be my last Will and Testament that is to say in the first place I give and recommend my soul to the hands of God who gave it and for my body I recommend it to the earth to be buried in a Christian like and decent manner at the discession of my Executors hereinafter appointed And as touching my worldly estate I give devise and dispose of the same in the following manner and form First I order that all my just debts and funeral charges be paid and satisfied—I give and bequeath unto my Wife Mary two beds and bedsteads with suitable furniture for the same of such as I have in my house and also a case of draws and a silver tankard and six silver spoons which said draws tankard and spoons are the same that came to me from my Wives father and also six common chairs and one great chair and six plates, two platters, three basons and six Knives and forks, and two cows and calves and also my black boy named Andrew I give to my son Samuel Thompson to him his heirs & assigns forever my dwelling house and all my other buildings and all my lands and meadows and commonage rights that I have in the Township of Brookhaven. Also I give and bequeath

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to my son Samuel my negro man named Sharper and all my farming tackling on the north side and also one yoke of oxen and and one bed and bedstead with suitable furniture for the same and further it is my will and I do order my son Samuel to pay unto my daughter Mary Smith the sum of one hundred pounds current money of New York and also the like sum of one hundred pounds to my daughter Hannah Strong the said sums to be paid at my decease. I give to my son Isaac Thompson to him his heirs & assigns forever all that my farm or neck of land and meadow at the south side the Island lying in the Township of Islip and is commonly Known by the name of apple tree neck together with all the buildings and improvements belonging to the same. And further it is my will and I do order my said son Isaac to pay unto my daughter Mary Smith the sum of one hundred and fifty pounds current money of New York and also the like sum of one hundred and fifty pounds unto my daughter Hannah Strong; the said sums to be paid at my decease. And further it is my Will and I do order that all my movable estate which is not otherways disposed of by this Will except money be equally divided between my son Samuel and my two daughters Mary Smith and Hannah Strong and concerning what money bonds or notes I shall leave at my decease it is my Will and I do order my Executors hereinafter appointed first to pay all my just debts and funeral charges out of the same and then what remains I do order to be equally divided between my two daughters Mary Smith and Hannah Strong. Lastly I do constitute and appoint my two sons Samuel Thompson & Isaac Thompson Executors of this my last will and testament. In Witness whereof I the said Jonathan Thompson have hereunto set my hand and fixed my seal the day and year above written.

Signed sealed published pronounced and declared by the said Jonathan Thompson as and for his last will and testament in the presence of the Subscribers who subscribed as Witnesses in the presence of the Testator.

JONATHAN THOMPSON (L. S.)

Jonathan's eldest son was Samuel, generally called Dr. Samuel, who upon the death of his father became the owner of the homestead. He was born October 2nd, 1738, and died September 17th, 1811, aged 73. He devoted himself to agricultural pursuits very assiduously during

early life in spite of ill health and even later while practising medicine found time to exercise a supervising authority over his extensive acres.

At the age of thirty he commenced the study of medicine, being induced to embrace it partly from a natural relish for the science and also to discover the causes of his own complaints and find some remedy for their relief and removal. After the usual course of study he entered upon the duties of his profession and soon became known as a successful practitioner, which reputation was sustained until ill health, a few years before his demise, forced him to relinquish his practice.

He was a firm believer in the efficacy of shells mixed with wood ashes and lime as a soil fertilizer and used Indian shell banks for this purpose; disintegrating the deposits and spreading them over his fields. In this way he fertilized about one hundred acres at the rate of ten hundred bushels to the acre. His expectations were fulfilled and the land showed the beneficial effects of this treatment after thirty years of cultivation.

We will digress here from our genealogical account and give the reader some idea of the present appearance of the old house as it strikes the eye of the interested beholder.

The particular locality where the house stands was anciently known as Nassakeag and is so called on several of the old deeds. Nassakeag was the Sachem of the Nissequogue Indians, whose domain adjoined this vicinity. Whether the place derived its name from being his residence or the Chief appropriated the name of the neighborhood for his own title or cognomen is not definitely known. I think the latter supposition is more plausible, as a similar word in the Chippewa language signifies "swamp," which was characteristic of the place. Even today there are several springs on the Thompson farm and a small stream whose bed is sometimes dry takes its sluggish course towards the mill-pond and thence to tidewater. The locality is now known as South Setauket.

The house sits rather near the road, facing west, and probably was considered large in the old days—it is sizable even now. Rectangular in shape, your first impression is one of solidity and honesty, if such a characteristic may be applied to a dwelling—and why not, for an ancient scholar has said that "the traits of men are woven into that which is wrought by their hands." Although the venerable structure is fast running to decay and "dust from dust," several points still strike the eye, principal of which is the doorway, a rather good example of colonial treatment, with lengthy vertical panels and knocker high above; not

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omitting the traditional "peep" windows on either side. Wood-shed, smoke-house and other out-buildings are in the rear.

The proportions of the house are also pleasing and the window placement has been well thought out and helps to give a substantial appearance to the dwelling.

Sad to say, the furniture and fittings, except mantels, have been removed, for it is used as a tool house by the agriculturist who is the present owner. An ignominious ending, you say, which is true; perhaps fortune may yet smile on the old house and cause it to come under the control of someone who will restore and protect it.

Back of the homestead and to the east on a commanding bluff, the family burial place is found. Enclosed by a rustic fence and shadowed by noble trees, it presents an appearance of rural simplicity—"calm peace and quiet"—which is befitting the abode of the dead.

Fortunately a very interesting account of life in the old house during the early years of the past century has been preserved to us in the shape of Dr. Samuel Thompson's Journal or Diary, which is in the possession of Mr. Orville B. Ackerly, a well-known authority on our Island's history. Two volumes have been saved, the first from March 5th, 1800, to February 9th, 1801; the second from November, 1802, to May, 1805. Besides telling us of life in the old house, they give an excellent idea of country life in the old days—of the work and play of our ancestors, and, lastly, quite a bit of local history. For these reasons we may be pardoned for tarrying awhile with the Doctor's journal.

To begin with, the diary shows us that the farmer of 1800 or thereabouts was absolutely self-supporting. By dint of thrift and hard labor he raised or wrought everything that his life required. The cultivation of the soil was, of course, his main reliance. On it he grew the various farm products and sold them to his unagricultural neighbors or shipped them to a more distant market. Along with the farming went cattle and sheep raising, wood-cutting in the winter time, raising flax for linen, and other pursuits.

Doctor Thompson, if nothing else, was a versatile husbandman and time was never allowed to lag on his premises. He was an extensive grower of flax and there are constant references to large sales of this useful material. Setauket seems to have been a center for its cultivation and Flax Pond is a reminder of an industry now forgotten. To this sheet of water the growers brought their stalks and steeped or "retted" them until the fibre was loosened from the core or rind. The stalks were then placed out to dry and the fibre, which produces our linen, was completely

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separated from the core. Retting must be done in fresh water and in those days the pond had no connection with the Sound. After the subsidence of flax cultivation an inlet was cut from Sound to pond and the water now is salt. Most of the flax comes from Russia and very little is made in this country at the present time.

Wool from the sheep was spun into cloth by the women folks. Local tailors would come to the house and make clothes for whoever needed them. Isaac Smith and Sally, his wife, were the local wielders of the shears and needle, and we read that "Isaac Smith comes and cutts out a coat for Franklin and trowsers and charges 2 shillings. Takes them home for Sally to make." Again we read, "Isaac Smith came here and cutt me a pair of britches and I pay him 1 shilling 6 pence for cutting them and a jacket for Franklin." Surely a modest charge for britches! Franklin is, of course, his son, Benjamin Franklin Thompson, who is revered by every student of Long Island's history. They did not even stop at shoes and we often read of John Duick "who helps us with the shoes." Ink also was made at home and on June 10th, 1800, "made some ink this day."

The holding of negro slaves was, of course, on a very small basis as compared with the South, but a few farm laborers and household servants could be found on most any large estate throughout the Island. They were kindly treated, generally contented with their lot and occasionally freed by indulgent masters. William S. Mount, the noted artist, has preserved for us many rural scenes in which the early Long Island darkies disport themselves. He was admittedly the first American painter to make a serious study of negro physiognomy and character, and they figure in his most famous canvases. The following document executed by Dr. Thompson shows the method of buying and handling slaves:

Brookhaven,* october the 30th 1800

This is to certify to all persons whom it may concern that in the month of August last I bought of Stephen Sweezey a negroe man named Killis and was to pay him one hundred and ten pounds at the end of three months for him I paid him the money for him as by the Bill of Sale he gave me for him will shew. My promise to the negroe man was that if he would and did really serve with me or my assigns or heirs: as it may happen to be as a good and faithfull serveant for the space of twelve years

* Brookhaven is the town of which Setauket is a village.

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from the day he first began to labour for me which was on Munday the 18th day of August 1800: that then and in that case he should be Emancipated and made free at the end of the twelve years, he continuing to conduct himself well and not otherwise. Now it is my will that in case he lives and does conduct himself as aforesaid for the space of twelve years as aforesaid and is at that time and age of sufficient ability to get his own living and that the Trustees or Court in whose power it may be to Emancipate him will consent thereunto and will give their Certificate to Emancipate him: in that case it is my will that my Executors or Heirs or they to whom I may assign him to in my family and that he the said negroe man does continue to live with or in my family and serves them and conducts himself well as aforesaid at that time it is my will and I do order that he be Emancipated and made free according to my promise made to him and not otherways and that in case he is made free he have his wearing apparell delivered to him. In witness whereof I have hereunto Set my hand and seal in Brookhaven this day and year above written and also it is my will that my three young negroes be made free also as they shall arrive at the age of thirty years old.

SAMUEL THOMPSON (seal)

The observance of New Year's Day was a great event among the colored folk and was generally celebrated with much hilarity and dancing, not to mention frequent libations from "the cup that cheers," which generally put the imbibers thereof into such a state that anything approaching work on the morrow was entirely out of the question. Another curious custom was the celebration by the negroes of Wick-Tuesday in January, "a day set apart to serve Satan." This was undoubtedly a survival of some ancient African practise of worshipping the evil spirit adapted to the biblical Satan.

For food the farm produced everything that was needed—wheat, potatoes, cabbages, corn, and apples, which were made into cider at Benjamin Hawkins' cider press at Nassakeag. Pigs were killed in the fall and supplied ham, bacon, lard, sausages and salt pork. Directly behind the dwelling there was a smoke house, with no opening save a door. In this structure the hams and bacons were hung from the ceiling or from rods running from wall to wall. A fire was made beneath them, so kindled that it gave forth a large amount of smoke, which imparted a very delicious flavor to the viands.

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Visiting cabinetmakers or joiners made the household furniture and Dr. Thompson tells us that "John Bayles makes a cabbin bedstead in the corner of the backroom." The worthy Mr. Bayles also did odd jobs of carpentry that were beyond the skill of Dr. Thompson and his servants, such as making new cellar doors, additional closets or rearranging the rooms. Charles Dallas did the plastering of the rooms and "John Roggers & Nathaneal Gerrard" were masons and "came here to work to build a stove chimney in my South Room and brought forward the back of the chimney in my North Room and laid three hearths in my fire-places." To give an idea of what charges these workmen made we will quote again: "I settle all accounts with John Bayles and pay him 12 shillings for three days work at his trade at six shillings a day. 36/0." For another day's work John Roggers, mason, is paid four shillings and Bayles, the carpenter, six. It is interesting here to note that household receipts and expenditures, also everyday financial deals among neighbors, were always calculated by pounds, shillings and pence, a reminder of the colonial days in the not very distant past. On the other hand, all legal transactions, such as payment of taxes, receipt of pensions, etc., were expressed in dollars and cents, the currency of the new nation. The colonial monetary system for common transactions held out for a few years after the period of the diary (1800-1805), especially in the country districts, but was finally displaced by the new coinage, which did not savor of bondage to a foreign power and comported better with the democracy of a republic.

During the spring of 1804, Dr. Thompson decided to erect a new barn, and on the morning of June 15th he made an arrangement with Daniel Overton, a carpenter, and his two apprentices to undertake the work. They were to be paid for their labor at the rate of 12 shillings a day for the three men and the Doctor to supply all materials. The work of pulling down the old barn was immediately started and completed in a day or so. Thereupon Overton drew a plan for a new barn 46 feet long by 40 feet wide, with corner posts 15 feet tall and slanting roof much higher. This was a pretty big structure for those days and the attention of the family and neighbors was centered upon it during the entire period of construction. The timber was cut from the wooded lots on the farm, being trimmed and squared for beams and rafters and flatted for boards on the spot by the carpenters. By the 3rd of August all the timber was prepared and the sills of the structure laid upon the ground; thereafter the attention of the carpenters was fixed upon the frame, which was rapidly being put together. Material for flooring, stalls and partitions

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which could not be advantageously prepared at the farm were purchased in New York and carried to Setauket harbor by sloop and from thence transported in wagons to the scene of operations. Shepard Mount, an ancestor of William S. Mount, Long Island's noted artist, was Dr. Thompson's purchasing agent and he says, "August 11th, this day put into Shepard Mount's hands sixty dollars to purchase boards for me at New York." The boards arrived on the 23rd instant; all hands repaired to the harbor and carted them to the farm, seven hundred boards—no less, not forgetting nails and other fittings.

Thus the work went on, some working on the framing braces and studs, while others devoted themselves to the manufacture of shingles. At last everything was in readiness for the barn raising, a day of days and a social event of no mean proportions. On Thursday, October 4th, the Doctor's son, Benjamin F., rode forth on the bay mare to invite the neighbors to attend the auspicious event on the following Saturday. Friday was a day of preparation not only for the barn, but for the appetites and thirsts of the expected guests on the morrow. Saturday dawned "pleasant and clear" and without a single adverse incident to mar the festivities, the frame of the "great new barn" was raised and the structure dubbed "The American Patriot"!

After raising, the work of completion went forward rapidly and shingles, windows, floors, partitions and, lastly, painting were all finished. Finally the great doors were hung on their hinges on November 23rd and the first load of hay put in on the same day.

We have gone into some detail about the old barn, not because the barn itself was important, but to show the old-time method of building, when materials for the most part were fashioned at home, when all hands did their part and, most important of all, to perpetuate the account of an old-fashioned raising, a homely custom which has long since passed into fond oblivion.

A reference or two more to the diary and we will close our account of Dr. Thompson and his life in the old house.

Besides the general store in the village kept by Isaac Satterly, our ancestors were supplied with calicos, muslins, hardware, books and a few luxuries such as silver knives and forks, through the visits of New England peddlers, who plied their trade through the length and breadth of the Island. An interesting story is told of a member of this gentry who arrived at Southampton on a Saturday, suffering from the measles. Desiring to make known his presence in the village, he attended divine service the following morning, in spite of a strong remonstrance on the

part of his landlady, and by so doing inoculated a considerable part of the assemblage with the germs of his disease, from the ravages of which several individuals died. Needless to say, on the following day, perceiving the evil he had started, the peddler attempted to escape, but was apprehended and brought back to town, where he experienced the joys of riding upon a rail through the streets, a ducking in the town pond and various other pleasantries of the same degree of delicacy. If the infuriated populace could have foreseen the dire and fatal results of his indiscretion, a more summary punishment would, no doubt, have been meted out. On the contrary, insult was added to injury, as the peddler sued his tormentors for assault, won his case and collected \$1,000 damages.

Tea drinking was much in vogue in the early years of the past century and invariably this harmless but invigorating beverage was served when callers pressed or tourists rested their jaded steeds on the way to the east end towns, for it must be remembered that the old homestead stood on the main highway leading to the Court House at Riverhead; Southold, and Greenport.

Two very interesting entries in the diary should here be chronicled. During February, 1805, a period of excessively low temperature prevailed and on the 5th instant Dr. Thompson notes: "very cold the sound froze over"; a truly rare occurrence. Again in May, 1804, Dr. Timothy Dwight, the famous President of Yale College, visited Setauket on his tour of Long Island. While at the village he was entertained by Judge Strong, on Strong's Neck, and Dr. Thompson makes note of the fact. The account of his journeyings was published under the title of "Dwight's Travels." It is a very well-known book and gives a wonderful insight to the state of the country at that period.

A few touches of humor and we must say good-bye to the interesting old diary:

"Sept. 4th 1800 John Brewster came here and paid me all my demands for cureing him of the third ague being the sum of three dollars." Cheap ague! Probably reduced rates for a steady customer.

"July 30th 1800, Isaac Biggs looses his horse kills himself by running away with the sled." The horse, not Isaac.

"Nov. 1st 1800 I rides to see my mother carry 2 pieces of pork." The Doctor was evidently a little weak on punctuation this day.

Doctor Thompson's activities were not all confined to the farm, however, as he was a member of the Long Island Militia during our War for Independence, and in other ways did his part in furthering the cause. In

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the time of preparation preceding the actual conflict he was a Committeeman from Brookhaven Town and as such signed the Association, which pledged its subscribers to support the New York Provincial Congress and the Continental Congress at Philadelphia, which were the governing bodies of the State and Nation, respectively, during the war. In the early days of the struggle before the Battle of Long Island, he held the position of Captain of the First Brookhaven Company in the First or Western Regiment of Suffolk County Militia and was on the organizing committee of the said Regiment. The Battle of Long Island was fought during August, 1776, at what is now Brooklyn, and the Americans were defeated. This reverse gave the enemy control of Long Island, whose defenders were in such small numbers that resistance was not to be thought of. Consequently the militia disbanded and many of the members repaired to Connecticut and joined the patriot forces stationed there. Thompson's company was dispersed along with the others and he crossed the Sound to Connecticut with his father's family, as did many other refugees. It is probable that he saw service while absent from Long Island, although there is no definite proof of this. His son, Benjamin F. Thompson, the historian, states that he was never in any considerable engagement, which would seem to infer that he might have been engaged in some minor skirmish. There is a record of a Samuel Thompson in several of the regiments during the war, but it is impossible to positively identify any mention of this Samuel with our subject.

Doctor Thompson made valuable surveys of Setauket and Stony Brook harbors, together with a description of the lands and beaches between them, including lengths and distances. These, at the instigation of the Suffolk County Committee, he sent to the New York Provincial Congress and they were received on February 15th, 1776.

He returned to Long Island during the War and his standing as a physician probably absolved him from molestation on the part of the enemy. His son, Benjamin F., speaking of his father, remarks as follows: "My father died on the 17th of September, 1811, and was buried in the family burial ground by the side of my mother on the 18th. His health had declined for some years and he was scarcely able to walk about, being afflicted by rheumatism and calculous complaint. He lay in a comatose state a day or two before his death and expired without a struggle. Thus died a man whose memory it becomes me to cherish with affectionate regard. If he had failings they were such as appertain to men by nature. A mind active and vigorous, with a constitution worn down and debilitated by hypochondria and other nervous affections,

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he attained to an age past the usual course of human life and died at the age of seventy-two."

WILL OF DR. SAMUEL THOMPSON—DATED JULY 25TH, 1810

In the name of God Amen I, Samuel Thompson of the Town of Brookhaven, County of Suffolk and State of New York Physician being weak in Body but of sound disposing mind and memory thanks be to God for the same and calling to mind the mortality of my body Knowing that it is appointed unto man once to die do therefore make and ordain this my last will and Testament in manner following Imprimis I give and bequeath unto my son Samuel Ludlow Thompson all my real Estate to him his heirs and assigns forever together with all my Servants Stock of Cattle Horses and small stock with all my farming utensils my silver Tankard Desk and watch also one half of my household furniture and do hereby direct my Executors after named to Keep all the Estate aforesaid both real and personal in their hands untill my said Son Samuel shall arrive at the age of twenty one years then they are to put him in possession of the same Iteme I give and bequeath unto my son Benjamin Franklin Thompson the full sum of one thousand Dollars to be paid him by my Executors after named as soon as may be convenient after my decease. Iteme I give and bequeath unto my Daughter Mary Woodhull Thompson the sum of two thousand dollars to be paid to her at the day of her marriage or when she shall arrive at the age of twenty one years to be left at the discretion of my Executors and to be let at Interest on real security for her use also I give her the privilege of a home in the room and Bedroom which I have given to her mother. Iteme I give unto my well beloved wife Ruth all the remaining part of my household furniture not heretofore disposed of together with the sum of thirty dollars yearly and every year as long as she shall remain my widow to be paid to her by my Executors out of the profits arising from my Estate and on giving up the same to my Son aforesaid tak such security from him for the payment of the same as will secure it to her for the time aforesaid I also give unto my wife Ruth the north room of my house with the adjoining Bedroom a privilege of the Kitchen and cellar and with all the carpeting belonging to the said Rooms with the privileges of Keeping two cows for her own use these previ-

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ledges to hold to my said wife Ruth so long as she remains my widow Iteme I order my son Samuel Ludlow Thompson when he arives at the age of twenty one years to pay unto my son Benjamin Franklin the sum of one thousand dollars in fore equal and yearly payments and if he shall refuse or neglect to perform the same and not pay the four several sums yearly as they become due in that case I order and direct my Executors to dispose of and sell so much Timber or other moveable property as will discharge the Legacies aforesaid as they shall become due Furthermore my will is that if my Son Samuel Ludlow shall die under Lawfull age leaving no lawfull issue in that case all the Estate given to him as aforesaid shall be equilly divided between my wife Ruth Thompson and my son Benjamin Franklin Thompson and my daughter Mary Woodhull Thompson one third to each and to their heirs and assigns forever I also order all my just debts to be paid by my Executors and to enable them to pay the same together with the Legacies aforesaid I charge my whole Estate I further direct my Executors at my decease to take charge of all my Estate real and personal and out of the profits arising from the same to keep my Family together and give my Children a decent English Education and should there remain any surplus money my will is that it should be applid toards the payment of the Legacy my son Samuel is ordered to pay to my son Benjamin as hereinbefore directed Lastly I do nominate constitute and appoint my well beloved wife Ruth Thompson Executrix my trusty and well beloved friend Isaac Thompson of Islip and Isaac Smith and Richard Smith Brothers to my wife all being in and of the said County of Suffolk Executors of this my last will and testament requesting them to take the burden of the same on themselves In Testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this twenty fifth day of July in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ten Signed Sealed published and declared by the said Samuel Thompson as and for his last will and testament in the presents of the subscribing witnesses

SAMUEL THOMPSON, (L. S.)

JOHN BAYLES

BENJAMIN HAWKINS

BENJAMIN HAWKINS, JUN.

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Whereas I Samuel Thompson of the town of Brookhaven County of Suffolk and State of New York Physician have made my last will and testament in writing bearing date the twenty fifth day of July in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ten and have thereby appointed my wife Ruth Thompson Executrix and my trusty friends Isaac Thompson of Islip and Isaac Smith and Richard Smith Brothers to my wife all being in and of the said County of Suffolk Executors of this my last will and testament but for divers causes it appears to me necessary to make some additions to my said last will and testament first it is my will and I do Order that my daughter Mary have a home in my dwelling house so long as she remains Single and further I do constitute and appoint my trusty friends Thomas S. Strong and Isaac Brewster Executors to my said in part recited last will and testament and lastly it is my desire that this my present codicil be annexed to and made a part of said last will and testament to all intents and purposes in witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and Seal this eighth day of August in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and Eleven Signed Sealed published and declared by the above Named Samuel Thompson as a codicil to be annexed to his said last will and testament

SAMUEL THOMPSON (L. S.)

JOHN BAYLES
SELAH STRONG
WILLIAM JAYNE

We now approach some mention of that individual whose birth and years spent in the old house are its chief bids to fame—whose full and useful life draws the attention of the passer-by to its weatherbeaten shingles and venerable appearance. We refer to Benjamin Franklin Thompson, author of "The History of Long Island," which is a guiding star for all those who would travel back along the interesting paths of our Island's history. In truth, his historical achievements have carried his renown through succeeding generations and have made his name a household word among book-lovers and those who are interested in Long Island and its history.

As an account by the writer of Thompson's famous book and his historical and genealogical achievements in general appeared in a third edition of the work recently published under the editorship of the author of this volume, we shall reprint it here as follows:



BENJAMIN F. THOMPSON

From a pencil sketch made by Shepard A. Mount in 1838

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"For many years previous to the appearance of the first edition of the 'History' he visited every county and town office on the Island, where he consulted the records of the respective counties and towns and interviewed hundreds of individuals possessed of historical records or who themselves were participants in the stirring events of the past. Thompson lived in a fortunate age for historical compilation. During the early part of his life many of the heroes of the Revolution were still alive and could tell him with their own lips of the interesting scenes they had witnessed. An added advantage was his close acquaintance with the historians and authors of his time, such men as Washington Irving, George Bancroft, E. B. O'Callaghan and Justice Kent. From these he obtained hints and helps in his laborious undertaking.

"Not content with investigating on Long Island, he examined the archives of the Secretary of State's office at Albany and the historical collection of New York City to further aid his task. Many of Long Island's first settlers came from New England, and in order to familiarize himself with their antecedents, he made a tour of the several States included in this territory and visited the larger libraries of Boston, Cambridge, Salem, Hartford, Worcester and New Haven.

"Thompson's history is to day recognized by all as the premier authority on Long Island, and this enviable position was won by the indefatigable researches and keen judgment of its author. In searching for historical accuracy, he carefully weighed every fact that came to his notice and never accepted a statement until it was thoroughly confirmed. He believed that a strict impartiality should be the aim of the true historian and that he should at no time descend to the level of an advocate or special pleader for any one class of persons or section of territory.

"Thompson was a methodical man and arranged his material in such a way that his book became a model for local histories. The reader will find that the Island as a whole is first dealt with—the counties are then touched upon and finally a detailed treatment of the several towns is offered. As Washington Irving said, 'it is quite a mine of local history.'

"The first edition was published at his own expense in 1839 by Eli French, 146 Nassau Street, New York, and was quickly disposed of. In 1843 a second edition, extended to two volumes, was brought out by Gould, Banks and Company, of 144 Nassau Street, New York, at the joint expense of author and publisher. The entire edition was exhausted in twelve months and many orders had to be refused. As Thompson says, 'an edition three times as large could have been disposed of.'

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"As these facts indicate, the merits of the book were immediately appreciated by the public and it received the universal approbation of the press. Very flattering letters were received by the author from such men as Washington Irving, George Bancroft, Henry Clay, William H. Seward and others, of lesser importance. A more concrete evidence of the esteem in which his historical labors were held is the fact that he was the recipient of not a few honorary and corresponding memberships in the best known historical and genealogical societies. Among these may be mentioned The New York, New Jersey and Connecticut Historical Societies, the New England Historic-Genealogical Society and the Brooklyn City Library.

"Thompson continued his historical investigations up to the time of his death. He felt that ancestry and environment called on him to preserve the traditions of his native Isle for future generations and to the work he gave his best talents.

"The last years of his full life were spent in rewriting considerable portions of the book and incorporating therein a great quantity of valuable historical information hitherto unpublished, the result of final investigations in his chosen field. A short time before his death the complete manuscript was finished and ready for the printer's hands. From that manuscript this book is printed and its publication is a fitting memorial to the man and his accomplishments.

"One year after the appearance of the second edition, our subject read an essay on the Indian names of places on Long Island and was at the time chosen a member of a committee charged with the compilation of an Indian map of the State.

"Thompson was in considerable demand as a lecturer upon historical topics and during his life appeared before many different societies and lyceums.

"His death in 1849 was untimely in many ways. During the last few years of his life he devoted himself to the collection of material for a contemplated history of Staten Island and if he had been spared, the undertaking would have been accomplished. Much of his correspondence with prominent men and antiquarians of Staten Island is in existence and exhibits their hardy coöperation in the work. His talents as a historian were then widely known and his embarkation upon the task created considerable interest.

"A genealogy of the Lawrence Family and a work on Curious American Epitaphs also engaged his attention, but these, too, were stopped by the stern hand of death. While on this subject, it is proper

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to remark that he was constantly appealed to for the compilation of genealogies for Long Island families, and his endeavors in this line formed a start for future genealogists of the Island. Many present-day workers consider Thompson the best authority on the subject. At his death he left accounts of practically all of the native families, some of which have been included as an appendix to the third edition of his 'History of Long Island' before mentioned."

To say that Thompson was solely a historian is to give him scant justice. The work of recording the interesting history of his native Isle is, of course, his chief and successful bid for fame, but he is also remembered as the best known and most learned attorney of his time on Long Island, as a District Attorney, legislator, Justice of the Peace, genealogist, and encourager of the arts and sciences. As is to be expected of a man of wide attainments, he enjoyed the friendship and esteem of many literary and public men of his period.

We will now retrogress a little and give an account of his early life in the old house in which he lived from his birth in 1784 until the spring of 1812. He was born on May 15th, 1784, the second child of Dr. Samuel Thompson (before mentioned) and Phebe Satterly, his first wife, who, of a rather frail constitution, but amiable disposition, died on July 7th, 1793.

At this point we will again reprint from the author's biography of Thompson in the "History of Long Island":

"Thompson's father was of a studious nature and saw to it that his young son began his education at an early age. The boy's first schooling was had with an old lady in the neighborhood, the wife of Timothy Tooker, familiarly known as Aunt Dinah. Under her auspices he mastered the alphabet and surmounted the difficulties of the New England Primer.

"His next instructress was Miss Charity Rogers, who, belying her name, was 'of a disposition irregular and tempestuous,' and whose temper could only be assuaged by venting it upon her unfortunate scholars.

"Thompson's mother died in 1793 and in October of the following year, at the age of ten, he entered the Academy at Easthampton and boarded at the household of Judge Abraham Miller in the village. In March, 1795, Thompson's father contracted a second marriage with Ruth Smith, daughter of Timothy and Seviah Smith, of Setauket, and during the following month young Benjamin returned to Setauket and attended the village school until October, 1796, when he entered the Academy then

lately erected at Huntington, and pursued his studies there for a period of six months."

As soon as the boy was old enough he began to help with the farm work and as early as 1800, when he was 16, we find constant references to his daily jobs, in his father's diary referred to before.

At an early age he evinced a desire for education and professional activities and it was decided that he should join the student body of Yale College at New Haven. With this end in view, in July, 1801, he began preparations for admittance under the instruction of Rev. Dr. David Ely of Ripton Parish, Fairfield County, Connecticut, and in September, 1802, joined the freshman class of the College, which at that time was presided over by the learned Dr. Timothy Dwight, who, as we have mentioned before, made a tour around Long Island in 1804. Frequent mention of the young man's stay at Yale is made in his father's diary and on December 18th, 1802, we read, "I write a letter to Franklin and lodged it in the Post Office with a bond of 500 dollars to the President and managers of Yale College," and again on April 12th, 1803, "Dicke Smith . . . rides on the neck* and carries a letter for Franklin and 130 Dollars of the Bank of New York to Joseph Strong to be carried to New York to go to New Haven for my son B. Franklin."

In these days of general college education, it is hard to conceive of the prestige and loftiness attached to those who were so fortunate as to be able to go to "New Haven" or "Cambridge," as the case might be. For those destined for the ministry or law a form of high education was, of course, incumbent upon them, but for others it was a rare and not-to-be-forgotten advantage, and thus the frequent mention by Dr. Thompson of his son's college experiences is readily understood.

In September, 1803, at the end of his freshman year, Franklin, as he was generally called, returned, and resumed his work on the farm. Much to his sorrow, Dr. Thompson felt that the cares of a large farm should be shared by his son, and Franklin was obliged to return to New Haven and obtain a permanent dismissal from the college authorities. Thus on November 14th, 1803, "The Renown loads at Bank Lots Franklin goes aboard with his chest and things and 86 dollars I furnish him with." Having taken thirteen days to make the trip, accomplish his errand and settle his affairs at Yale, he returned to Setauket on the 26th, to wit: "Franklin returns to the Island with Joseph Hulse. Runs ashore on the beach at the point of the harbour on Mount Misery side gets his

* Strong's Neck.

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things wet but lost nothing having gotten a Dismission from the president of Yale College haveing laid out in Books and paid away about Eighty Dollars in Cash. He thinks he had lost near thirty Dollars taken away in the summer before at college." Our readers will take notice that Mount Misery was aptly named in this case! On his return Thompson again took up his farm work and made the best of his lot.

At this point our subject began to take an interest in public affairs, also literary matters, and it is one of the very interesting things about his life that even at this early age he soon became known as a man of parts and as one exhibiting good judgment and a correct understanding of the questions of the day.

"His time was now divided between rural pursuits and the perusal of a few medical works procured from time to time, in addition to such books as his father's library contained. Thus we see that at an early age Thompson evinced a desire for the pursuit of a professional life.

"From October, 1804, to the month of March following, he pursued medical studies under Dr. Ebenezer Sage, of Sag Harbor, a leading practitioner and Member of Congress from Suffolk County. In addition to these studies he spent the winter of 1806-07 in attending a course of lectures in the medical department of Columbia College and attended the clinics of the New York Hospital. On his return home he obtained the requisite authority to practise and immediately met with success. Thompson practised medicine for ten years and was well known for his skill throughout the neighborhood, although much of his time was taken up by farm cares and public offices. He finally relinquished his medical practise for the law, which seemed to offer better advantages for the display of his talents, in which supposition he was correct, as later events proved."*

Thompson was the founder of a small Public Library at Setauket, known as the Franklinian Library, named in honor of Benjamin Franklin, the eminent patriot and savant. It only consisted of about 300 volumes, but was a great incentive towards self-education among the villagers. After a good many years of life, the institution was finally abandoned and the books scattered. If its founder had continued to live at Setauket, its fate would have probably been postponed during his lifetime.

Among Thompson's many other public activities while a resident in the old house may be mentioned the fact that he was Assistant Clerk of

* Reprinted from Biography in "History of Long Island."

HISTORICAL MISCELLANIES

Suffolk County in 1811 under Ezra L'Hommedieu, the celebrated patriot and member of the Continental Congress.

In the spring of 1808, he delivered an oration on the repeal of the Embargo Act which had been in force for some time on account of danger to our shipping through the unscrupulous practises of foreign powers then at war with one another; a situation which is somewhat approximated at the present time by our neutral position in the great war.

On June 12th, 1810, he was married to Mary Howard, daughter of the Rev. Zachariah Greene, "the fighting parson," who at that time and for many years thereafter was Pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Setauket.

In the old days, as now, the Fourth of July was celebrated by appropriate patriotic exercises in most every village in the land, and Setauket was no exception to the rule. In 1811 the exercises commemorating our national holiday were held in the Presbyterian Church and on this occasion Thompson delivered a political oration so much admired that a copy of it was forwarded to Thomas Jefferson, who gratefully acknowledged its receipt from Monticello, Va., under date of August 5th, 1811.

When our country became involved in the second war with Great Britain in 1812, Thompson was commissioned Surgeon in Col. James Davis' Regiment of Brookhaven Militia, which helped in the work of guarding the shores of Suffolk County from marauding parties sent ashore by the British fleet stationed in Gardiner's Bay and Long Island Sound. His father-in-law, Rev. Zachariah Greene, was Chaplain of the same regiment.

On June 25th, 1810, Thompson, together with Jonas Hawkins and Charles H. Havens, both of Brookhaven Town, instituted at Setauket a branch of the Tammany Society, whose headquarters were in New York. Our subject had joined the parent body in April, 1809, and was so impressed with its patriotic motives that he conceived the idea of starting a branch council of the Society in his own village.

He was chosen Grand Sachem of the council, which immediately became very popular and on its first year of existence boasted of 109 members. The council was known as Beaver Tribe No. 4 of the State of New York and No. 1 of the Island of Nassau.*

It is known that Thompson was the originator and prime mover in the organization and it seems likely that the organization meeting and

* The original manuscript volumes containing the by-laws, proceedings, list of members, etc., of this council are owned by Mr. Orville B. Ackerly.

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subsequent assemblages were held in the old homestead. There is no positive evidence of this, as the records of the council make no mention of the meeting place, but this very omission in the writer's opinion points towards the old house. He thinks it very unlikely that meetings were held in a public building or else mention would be made of the fact. Public meetings were important events in the lives of our ancestors and the place of meeting, if in a public hall or school-house, was generally mentioned as giving somewhat of prestige to the movement. Perhaps some of our readers can throw some light on the question.

To understand the full significance of the Tammany Society we must outline a little of the history of our land at this period. After the close of the War for Independence, the several States adopted the Constitution and thereby instituted the United States of America. The Federal party were the Constitutionals and it was owing to their strong and correct principles of centralized or federal government that our country went safely through the many perils attendant to the founding of a new state and wrought itself into a nation.

During the first twelve years of the nineteenth century, France and England were constantly at war and preyed upon our commerce—England being the chief offender.

The Federal party being fearful of entangling alliances, were so slow in holding up our clear rights in the matter that the temper of the people was aroused against their old enemy, England. To further such patriotic feelings the Tammany Society came into existence and also in opposition to the ultra-aristocratic societies of the Federalists, such as the Society of the Cincinnati and others which encouraged class prejudices and smacked too much of the aristocratic tendencies of Great Britain for the rank and file to swallow. In short, Tammany was the expression of the common people and its branches or councils throughout the land did a good work in bolstering up the faint hearts of the Federalists and discouraging undemocratic ways of government. Finally the country could stand no more and, in 1812, war was again declared on England in spite of the Federalists. The struggle was the death knell of this party, and they never regained their supremacy or prestige and soon after became non-existent, for no party can live which is opposed to a war in which the whole country is engaged. Thus the council at Setauket was part and parcel of the republican wave which, sweeping over the country, finally culminated in the successful war above mentioned. Those opposed to the Federalists were known as Democratic-Republicans and, finally, simply as Democrats. They were the fore-

runners of the Democratic party of today, which has had a continuous existence from this movement up to the present time.

The branch councils are not in existence today, but the parent body at New York is still a very potent factor among the Democrats of the nation and has controlled the party in the city of New York for many years and quite often that of the State.

As we have mentioned before, Benjamin F. Thompson's father, Dr. Samuel Thompson, died on September 17th, 1811, and left the homestead and farm to his youngest son, Samuel Ludlow Thompson, an issue of the Doctor's second marriage with Ruth, daughter of Timothy and Seviah Smith; and therefore a half brother to Benjamin F. He was born March 5th, 1799; married Sophia Satterly, February 12, 1842, and died February 6th, 1865, 11 days after the death of his wife. At the time of the elder Thompson's demise, Samuel L. was under age and by the terms of his father's will (see p.—) the property was held in trust for him by the executors until he attained the age of twenty-one, when he came into possession of it, which was of course in 1820.

To his eldest son, Benjamin F., he left a sum in cash outright and stipulated that further sums should be paid to him out of the estate at stated intervals in the future (see will).

The wisdom of this disposition of the Doctor's property is shown in the fact that his son Benjamin was on a fair way to become prominent along professional lines rather than as a farmer, hence the cash bequests and the leaving of the farm to his other son.

In April, 1812, seven months after his father's death, Benjamin F. Thompson, with his wife, left the old homestead, terminating by this act a continuous residence of twenty-eight years lacking one month in the old house. It was his boyhood home and within the old walls preparation was made for the useful and honored life he was destined to live—nay more than this, for before the final leave-taking he had already made a name for himself in his chosen pursuits.

He did not leave Setauket at this time however, but resided there until the autumn of 1824, when he removed to Hempstead where the balance of his life was spent. For further details of his life after leaving the old house, we would refer the reader to his Biography, published in the Third Edition of his famous "History of Long Island."

Samuel Ludlow Thompson fulfilled his father's hopes as an agriculturist, and during his lifetime the ancestral acres were known as one of the most successful and prolific farms in the county. Many times its produce was exhibited at the several agricultural fairs and exhibitions and they often

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carried off highest honors. For several years he was an officer of the Suffolk County Agricultural Society. His only child was a daughter, Mary Woodhull, who inherited the property at her father's death on February 6th, 1865, in the sixty-sixth year of his age.

Mary Woodhull Thompson was born on January 18th, 1843, and was therefore twenty-two years old at her father's death. She owned the property until her death in October, 1885. She was twice married, first to William L. Berrian, and second to Thomas S. Griffing on January 14th, 1868. By her first marriage she had Mary Berrian, who married Olaf Jergenson, and by her second, Thomas S. Griffing and James Rogers Griffing, who died in infancy. Mrs. Griffing, by her will, left the old homestead and farm to her two surviving heirs above named. She also appointed James E. Baylis, of Port Jefferson, as executor with power to sell the property if necessary. On December 10th, 1887, he conveyed it to Adeline and Anna A. Garrison, of Brooklyn.

Thus the Thompson homestead passed out of the family after having been in their possession for one hundred and seventy-eight years.

The present owner is Woodhull Rowland, who obtained the premises from the Garrisons.



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